

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information exchange method in which:

two or more terminal devices for information exchange connected to a computer network obtain content of interest rendered by media;

first and second terminal devices for information exchange send information to identify the content and target area selected to define a part or all of an object from the content to the other terminal device, respectively, across the computer network; and

based on the information to identify the content and target area selected received, the first and second terminal devices send/receive messages to/from the other terminal device.

2. An information exchange method as recited in claim 1 wherein:

said first terminal device for information exchange receives or retrieves content of interest rendered by media and sends first information to identify the content and first target area selected to define a part or all of an object from the content to an information exchange server equipment across the computer network;

said second terminal device for information exchange receives or retrieves content of interest rendered

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by media and sends second information to identify the content and second target area selected to define a part or all of an object from the content to the information exchange server equipment across the computer network;

the information exchange server equipment makes up a group of said first and second terminal devices for information exchange, according to a grouping method using said first and second information to identify the content and said first and second area selected that it received;

the first terminal device for information exchange sends a first message to said information exchange server equipment across the computer network;

said information exchange server equipment sends said first message that it received to one or more terminal devices for information exchange belonging to said group and including said second terminal device for information exchange across the computer network; and

said second terminal device for information exchange receives and outputs said message.

3. An information exchange method as recited in claim 2 wherein:

said grouping method comprises one of or a combination of a plurality of the following:

grouping terminal devices for information exchange for which matching to a certain extent occurs regarding said information to identify the content received therefrom;

grouping terminal devices for information exchange for which matching to a certain extent occurs regarding said information to identify the content and said target area selected, received therefrom;

grouping terminal devices for information exchange by limiting the number of terminal devices to form a group to a given number;

grouping terminal devices for information exchange for which matching occurs in one of or a plurality of items of information designating appointed identifiers of terminal devices for information exchange, geographical area, interests, content titles, and community, respectively.

4. An information exchange method in which:

an information exchange server equipment makes up a group of two or more terminal devices including first terminal device for information exchange and second terminal device for information exchange;

said first terminal device for information exchange obtains content of interest rendered by media and sends information to identify the content, target area selected

to define a part or all of an object from the content, and a message to said information exchange server equipment across a computer network;

said information exchange server equipment sends said information to identify the content, said target area selected, and said message that it received to one or more terminal devices for information exchange belonging to said group and including said second terminal device for information exchange across the computer network; and

said second terminal device for information exchange receives and records or retrieves content of interest rendered by media, outputs said information to identify the content that it received and a frame from the content including the object defined by said target area selected, and outputs said message that it received.

5. An information exchange method as recited in claim 4 wherein:

said information exchange server equipment makes up a group of terminal devices for information exchange having a group identifier registered beforehand.

6. An information exchange method as recited in claim 4 wherein:

said information exchange server equipment makes up a group of terminal devices for information exchange in such a way in which:

said server equipment makes a list of one or more groups that have been made up and related information (which will be referred as group information hereinafter) and sends the group list to the first terminal device for information exchange across the computer network;

said first terminal device for information exchange receives and outputs the group list, selects the group information for one group from the group list, and sends the selected group information to the server equipment across the computer network; and

the server equipment sets the first terminal device joined the group appointed by the selected group information.

7. An information exchange method as recited in claim 6 wherein:

said group information includes said information to identify the content and said target area selected.

8. An information exchange method as recited in claim 4 wherein:

said message comprises one of or a combination of a plurality of the following items: character strings of text and keywords, audio information, video information, advertising information, time information, thumbnail images, and pointer information.

9. A terminal device for information exchange comprising means for inputting and displaying content of interest rendered by media; means for obtaining information to identify the content; means for obtaining target area selected to define a part or all of an object from the content; means for inputting messages; and means for transmitting and receiving said information to identify the content, said target area selected, and messages over a computer network.

10. A terminal device for information exchange as recited in claim 9 further comprising means for storing said content of interest; and means for generating and displaying a thumbnail image from said information to identify the content, said target area selected, and said content of interest stored.

11. A terminal device for information exchange as recited in claim 9 further comprising time shifting means for recording and reproducing said content of interest.